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Human rights questions: implementation of human rights instruments; human rights questions, including alternative approaches for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms; comprehensive implementation of and follow-up to the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action

Measures to eliminate international terrorism

Letter dated 27 November 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith the text of a telephone interview of Sheikh Hamad bin Jassem bin Jabr Al Thani, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the State of Qatar, conducted by Al-Jazeera channel on 24 November 2001, concerning his call to the Northern Alliance troops to treat the captives from Taliban fighter and other groups as prisoners of war (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 119 (a), (b) and (d) and 166, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Nassir Abdulaziz **Al-Nasser**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 27 November 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: Arabic]

Statements of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Qatar

Doha, 24 November 2001

His Excellency Sheikh Hamad bin Jassem bin Jabr Al Thani, Minister for Foreign Affairs, has expressed the deep concern of the State of Qatar for the fate of the thousands of Afghan, Arab and other combatants encircled in Kunduz, some of them having surrendered to Northern Alliance forces while the whereabouts of others remains unknown. The Minister voiced his fears at the manner in which the Northern Alliance forces were currently dealing with the critical situation in the city and region of Kunduz in north-eastern Afghanistan.

In a telephone interview with Al-Jazeera satellite television station, the Minister urged the Northern Alliance forces to treat all captured Taliban and other categories of combatants as prisoners of war in accordance with the Geneva Convention and the relevant norms of international law, cautioning that it would be a serious matter for the Alliance forces to adopt a policy of differentiation.

He indicated that His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, beloved Amir of Qatar, had instructed him to monitor the prisoner issue and to communicate for that purpose with Mr. Colin L. Powell, United States Secretary of State, in order to convey Qatar's concern at the reported massacres of Arabs presently in Afghanistan, despite the fact that we know that not all of the captured combatants in Afghanistan are Arabs.

He asked for caution in dealing with the issue of these captured combatants. He said: "The United States Secretary of State shared my concern ... and he told me that the United States of America had communicated with all those concerned in the Afghan Northern Alliance and had requested them not to endanger the lives of the prisoners and not to massacre them or commit massacres in any other place in Afghanistan. ... We have asked a number of parties active in the international arena to bring pressure to bear in order to induce all the Afghan groups to avoid anything that might further complicate the situation." He confirmed that Qatar had obtained assurances from the United States in this regard and that the United States was taking our concern seriously.

In reply to a question concerning Qatar's communications with the League of Arab States on the same subject, the Minister stated that Qatar had spoken of the matter with the Secretary-General of the League, had informed him of the statement issued by its Ministry of Foreign Affairs and had put him in the picture with respect to its international contacts on the issue. He indicated that the Secretary-General of the League shared Qatar's concern for the safety of all prisoners in Afghanistan and its anxiety, based on the Islamic creed and international humanitarian and moral principles, that they should not be involved in any massacres.

He reaffirmed Qatar's neutrality on Afghan internal affairs and urged the Afghan parties to resolve their various issues in accordance with the norms of international law.